

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 04920 191611Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 NSCE-00

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O 191450Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7984

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL KADUNA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, NI

SUBJECT: STUDENT STRIKE: VIOLENT CLASHES AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF LAGOS

REF: (A) LAGOS 4878, (B) IBADAN 0443

1. SUMMARY: STUDENT-POLICE CLASHES IN LAGOS APRIL
18 RESULTED IN SEVERAL INJURIES AND CONFRONTATION
CONTINUED APRIL 19. STUDENT LEADERS APPARENTLY ARE
CONTINUING EFFORTS TO INCITE FURTHER ACTION AND
STUDENT MANIFESTO APPEALS FOR SUPPORT FROM OTHER
ELEMENTS OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY. POLICE APPEAR TO HAVE
SITUATION WELL IN HAND AND WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATIONS
OF SUPPORT OUTSIDE UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO MORNING PRESS REPORTS APRIL 19,
VIOLENT STUDENT-POLICE CLASHES OCCURRED OUTSIDE THE
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS (UNILAG) YESTERDAY WHEN POLICE
BROKE UP A STUDENT PROTEST MARCH. STUDENTS HAD
PLANNED TO MARCH FROM UNILAG TO DODAN BARRACKS TO
PROTEST RECENT INCREASE IN ROOM AND BOARD FEES AT
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 04920 191611Z

ALL NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES. SEVERAL STUDENTS REPORTEDLY
SUFFERED INJURIES AND AT LEAST ONE WAS HOSPITALIZED.
PUNCH, WHICH IS NOTED FOR ITS SENSATIONAL REPORTS,
CARRIED STORY WITH PICTURES OF ITS REPORTER AT UNILAG
BEING BEATEN AND LEFT 'UNCONSCIOUS'.

3. PRESS REPORTS THAT ABOUT 6000 STUDENTS, SOME ARMED WITH

CLUBS AND CARRYING PLACARDS PROTESTING THE FEE INCREASE, ASSEMBLED ON THE CAMPUS BEFORE NOON. WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO MOVE OFF CAMPUS, THE STUDENTS WERE STOPPED BY MASSED POLICE. AFTER AN EXTENDED VERBAL

CONFRONTATION, VIOLENCE ERUPTED WHEN STUDENTS ATTEMPTED TO BREAK THROUGH POLICE LINES. THE POLICE REGROUPED AND USED TEAR GAS TO BREAK UP THE MARCH.

4. OTHER PRESS ACCOUNTS REPORT THAT ANTI-RIOT POLICE CONFRONTED STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IFE; HOWEVER, VIOLENCE WAS AVERTED. SIMILARLY, A PEACEFUL PROCESSION INTO IBADAN WAS REPORTEDLY CARRIED OUT BY UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN STUDENTS.

5. STUDENT LEADERS APPARENTLY ARE ATTEMPTING TO INCITE FURTHER TROUBLES. ONE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) MEMBER WHO HAD BEEN AT NTV STUDIOS EVENING OF APRIL 18 SAID THAT A STUDENT DELEGATION APPEARED IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO 9 P.M. NETWORK NETS WITH A PAIR OF BLOODY SHOES ALLEGING THAT A STUDENT HAD BEEN KILLED DURING DAY'S DEMONSTRATIONS. NTV CHECKED THE REPORT WITH THE POLICE, WHO DENIED IT, AND IT WAS NOT BROADCAST. NATIONAL UNION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS (NUNS) PRESIDENT AND CA MEMBER SEGUN OKEOWO, WHO APPEARED AN CA FOR GENERAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 04920 191611Z

OBSANJO'S ADDRESS MORNING OF APRIL 19, BROUGHT DELEGATION OF STUDENTS WHO MET BRIEFLY WITH PRESS FOLLOWING SESSION. ALTHOUGH EMBOFF WAS UNABLE TO HEAR STATEMENT OR OBTAIN COPY, CA MEMBERS PRESENTED GRUMBLED BRIEFLY ABOUT OKEOWO'S ATTEMPT TO CREATE PROBLEMS.

6. ALTHOUGH PRESS REPORTING IS FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC ISSUE OF FEES AT UNIVERSITIES, WELL PRINTED STUDENT HANDOUT WHICH EMBOFF OBTAINED WAS ADDRESSED TO 'BRETHREN IN UNIFORM', PRESENT, 'TOILING WORKING MASSES', 'ALL WHO WISH NIGERIA WELL', AND 'ALL COLLEAGUES, COMRADES AND COMPATRIOTS' INCLUDED LENGTHY LIST OF GRIEVANCES:

- INCREASE IN FEES AT FEDERAL COLLEGES AND STATE INSTITUTIONS;
- POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION,
- POST OF MILITARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE,
- SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS,
- INFLATION WHICH PREVENTS 'OUR POVERTY-STRICKEN PARENTS AND THE TOILING MASSES' FROM AFFORDING 'UNJUSTIFIABLE EXORBITANT FEE INCREASES';
- 'ELITIST EDUCATIONAL POLICY' WHICH DEEPENDS AND WIDENS THE 'YAWNING GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR.'

DECLARATION CONCLUDES WITH 'OUR DEMAND':

- 'REFORM AND DEMOCRATIZE EDUCATION;
- EDUCATION IS A RIGHT AND NOT A PRIVILEGE;
- EDUCATION SHOULD BE MADE A POPULAR COMMODITY AND NOT AN EXCLUSIVELY ELITIST LUXURY;
- EDUCATION SHOULD BE COMPULSORY AND FREE AT ALL LEVELS.'

7. AT SAME TIME SOME STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITY OF
IFE (UNIFE) AND UNIVERSITY OF BENIN WERE ATTEMPTING DIS-
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS FROM CURRENT CONFRONTATION. DAILY TIMES
REPORTED THAT A GROUP OF UNIFE STUDENTS INCLUDING 'FINAL YEAR,
POST GRADUATE, CLINICAL AND ASSOCIATES' HAD TRAVELLED
TO LAGOS AND ISSUED STATEMENT URGING NUNS TO LISTEN
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PAGE 04 LAGOS 04920 191611Z

TO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION (NUC) SAYING,
'FROM PAST EXPERIENCES SUCH CONFRONTATIONS HAVE NEVER YIELDED
ANY POSITIVE RESULTS.'

8. COMMENT: NUNS LEADERSHIP IS CLEARLY ATTEMPTING
TO APPEAL FOR SUPPORT BEYOND THE NARROW CONFINES OF
THE CAMPUS. POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS OF OKEOWO, WHO
IS AN AVOWED SOCIALIST, ARE CLEAR. PERHAPS HE HOPES
TO CAPITALIZE ON CURRENT DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS--
SHARIA COURT AND LAND TENURE --TO FORCE A NATIONAL
POLITICAL CRISIS. ON PRACTICAL LEVEL POLICE
APPEAR TO HAVE SITUATION IN HAND ON CAMPUS AND
CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE CA ON APRIL 19
WOULD SUGGEST NUNS IS GAINING LITTLE SUPPORT ELSEWHERE.
WYMAN

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